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 February 2023
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## The Eermenical Pullication from THE ALWAYE FELLOWSHIP HOUSE

## Church Weekly

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C/o The Alwaye Fellowship House Union Christian College P.O. Alwaye - 683 102, Kerala, South India. Ph : 0484-2605630, 2606986

## E-mail : churchweeklyafh@gmail.com fellowshiphse@gmail.com <br> Chief Editor : mgk.afh@gmail.com Website <br> www.alwayefellowshiphouse.com



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## Fellowship News

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## Republic Day Celebrations

The $74^{\text {th }}$ Republic Day was celebrated at the Fellowship House. Secretary Kuruvilla M George hoisted the National Flag and spoke briefly about the importance of the day. The residents of Chacko Homes / Fellowship House and many wellwishers participated in the patriotic function.


## Chacko Homes Day Celebrations

The $25^{\text {th }}$ year of Chacko Homes was celebrated in a befitting manner on the "Chacko Homes Day" on $26^{\text {th }}$ January 2023 in a function at the M Thommen Hall. Secretary Kuruvilla M George welcomed the audience and delivered a short message recalling the historical moments in the formation of the Fellowship House and Chacko Homes. The highlight of the Day was "Honouring the senior residents above the age of 85 years" ( 19 persons) with garlands and mementos. Sri C.T. Philip and Sri John Kuruvilla spoke on behalf of those honoured in the function. Treasurer Santhosh Oommen and Director K O Elias spoke on the occasion. Variety entertainments by the residents and staff added colour to the function.


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 was the only one who walked on water, besides Jesus; but he was also the only one who got out of the boat. Until you make a decision to

believe, and then act on it, nothing will happen."
























































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'If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat' - கselゥe พoகவ๑ைை






















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 You can see its beginning, but not its end."









































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## KEY FEATURES

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(ธேกัา โேஜ゙ 34)

# The Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes 



The phrase 'Word of God' means different concepts to different people. Apostle John wrote that Jesus was the 'Word' that became flesh -human. "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1: 1, 2, 14).

All Christian denominations accept this. So we are on safe grounds if we say that Jesus was 'Word of God' and that the words that Jesus spoke on formal occasions were words from God.

Through the parables we studied the words spoken by Jesus about the kingdom of God/ heaven in descriptive and allegorical terms, not defined terms. They have to be grasped conceptually, not organisationally because there are no physical boundaries for this kingdom. Yet, the concept of the kingdom of God/heaven has breadth and depth. We have to take both the allegorical parables and the words spoken directly about the kingdom of God/heaven, with their contexts in mind, to synthesise a true and meaningful concept. So, let us explore.

In the early days of His public ministry, Jesus was in Nazareth and later in Capernaum, both in Galilee. People wanted to hear more - but Jesus told them: "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4: 43). Jesus was near the lake shore after choosing the twelve disciples. "And, seeing the multitudes He went up on a mountain, and when He was
seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them..." Matthew 5: 1-2). Matthew devoted Chapters 5,6 and 7 for a series of lessons taught by Jesus. These teachings are popularly called the Sermon on the Mount.

Luke wrote: "He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases" (Luke 6: 17). Matthew had mentioned that the crowd consisted of people "from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan" (Matthew 4: 25). So far the scene was identical. Then followed a slight difference in the description, Matthew recording that Jesus went up on a mountain and was seated but Luke's version was that He came down to a level place, surrounded by the crowds.

Luke continued: "Then He lifted up His eyes towards His disciples [who were among the multitudes] and said: Blessed are you poor..." (Luke 6: 20). There was a mountain, valley, the twelve specially chosen disciples and the eager listeners who were also called disciples as well as the multitude.

Jesus was visible and audible to the crowd - so either He was above them on a mount on a slope or below them, in a valley, on a slope. There is a saying that "Exception proves the rule." Matthew was an eye-witness. Luke was told by others, during his research. It seems, probably, they were describing two occasions
(among the many occasions) when Jesus spoke to the crowds in a valley - once seated on the high ground and looking down to the listeners and another time standing on level ground and looking up to them.

Jesus spoke the Beatitudes - three are recorded in Luke's gospel (remember, Luke was not a direct listener, but a researcher-writer). The first Beatitude was: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6: 20). In Matthew's gospel the Beatitudes are more elaborate.
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). There is a Psalm-like poetic beauty all right, but the exact meaning of some of the phrases - like poor in spirit, or those who hunger and thirst for righteousness - are not explicit, but we have to think and interpret.

When we considered the 'Lord's Prayer' we observed it as the 'kingdom prayer'. When we consider the Sermon on the Mount, of which the Beatitudes are just a part, we realise that it is all about the attributes, qualities and consequences of becoming members (or citizens) of the kingdom of God/heaven. Indeed, the Lord's Prayer is subsumed in the Sermon on the Mount - whether it was one sermon, or a collection recollected by Matthew, we will never know - probably the latter, as already alluded to above.

Once we realise that we belong to this kingdom, we must become the 'salt of the earth', the 'light of the world', we must 'walk the second mile', trust God completely, never be judgemental, love our enemies, build our ideas and plans on the 'rock' and not on 'sand', bear fruit, and must not be enslaved by wealth. The origin of evil is the mind - poetically, the heart. So keep the heart pure - blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall 'see'(feel the presence of) God - nothing less.

Jesus said: "I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5: 20). The righteousness of 'religiosity' is not sufficient, but the kingdom's righteousness must exceed it and be true righteousness. "Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 5: 21). Purity of heart is necessary for true righteousness and for seeking and doing God's will.

Religion, even the monotheist one, without righteousness, became murderous. Having taken beliefs, rules and rituals as sacrosanct, whatever deviated from them was defined as evil and whoever taught any deviation (even if true) was the enemy to be annihilated. Was that not the reason why High Priests, Pharisees and Sadducees shouted "Crucify Him?" False charges were necessary, for death penalty had to be decreed by Pilate and religious dissent was not reason enough to seek death penalty or to convince the judge to decree death. Here was religion sans righteousness.

Every loyal religionist, no matter what religion one belongs to, has to face this trap. One can feel too 'loyal to one's religion' to be truly righteous - beware. The medieval Crusades are an example. We all must meditate on our own righteousness in and outside our own religion. Violence in the name of religion is all too familiar for us. It is very common to hear 'in the name of God' when what is meant is 'in the name of religion'. If 'Religion' can mislead, we need a paradigm shift in understanding the true nature of what 'Religion' is all about - that paradigm shift is so perfectly represented and presented in the concept of kingdom of God/heaven.
(To be continued)

## SHARNG mom CARNG



Caring for others and sharing with them what we have make our lives happy, meaningful and worth living. The Bible says, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices, God is well pleased"' (Heb 13:16). Sharing for the benefit of each other is seen very much among the flora and fauna of nature. Man, though endowed with superior knowledge and wisdom needs to take lessons from them. Interdependence / mutual support helps the trees in the forest and coastal areas to withstand natural calamities like heavy storm and rain.

The Redwood tree is an evergreen tree living for 1200 to 2200 years or more in the coastal areas of central California. Tallest of all trees, it grows upto a height of 380 feet and a width of 18 feet. Though it has no deep roots in the soil, it lives long because of its bond with the neighbouring Redwood trees. Its fibrous roots intertwine with the roots of those trees and thereby make a networklike bond which helps it to survive natural calamities and to remain firm in the soil for centuries. Similarly, if only we share what we have with others, we will enjoy the warmth of true love and happiness in life.

Israel has two famous lakes - the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. The Dead Sea
is a lake with very high salt content, as high as $35 \%$, which is almost ten times that of the salinity of normal ocean water. The human body can float on the surface of its water. It is devoid of all forms of life - no fish, no vegetation, no sea-animals. Nothing lives in it and that's how it gets the name Dead Sea. Just to the north of the Dead Sea is the Sea of Galilee. Yet, unlike the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee is resplendent with abundant marine life lots of plants and animals. In fact, the Sea of Galilee is a home to over twenty different types of fishes. Galilian Tilapia which is commonly called St. Peter's fish is a variety found there, right from Christ's time.

Both these lakes receive water from the same source - River Jordan. Yet one is full of life, the other is dead. River Jordan flows unto the Sea of Galilee and it flows out. This keeps the lake healthy and vibrant teeming with marine life. But the Dead Sea being far below the sea level has no outlet. The water that flows into the sea from the river Jordan does not flow out. And since there are no outlet streams, it is estimated that millions of tons of water evaporate from the Dead Sea every day leaving it salty and full of minerals, making it quite unfit for any marine life.
(Contd. on page 29)



## Resolution



It's 2023, a New Year, and time for the word RESOLUTION to be uttered, and, in some cases, to be practised for a few days, weeks or months, and in a few cases, till the end of the year. Resolution typically means a firm decision to do or not to do something - the quality of being determined.

Historically, the first recorded people to set new year pledges, later to become known as resolutions, are the ancient Babylonians, some 4,000 years ago. The Babylonian civilization is also the first to hold recorded celebrations in honour of the new year.

We see a mention of the new month in the Old Testament, (Exodus 12:2) "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." The scriptures say that God made resolutions, and he has followed them. There were actions He resolved to perform, commitments He made for the everlasting good of the believers. God's resolutions were made long before the beginning of a new year, and His resolutions will last longer than those made by human beings. It is human behaviour to follow their resolutions for two weeks, a month or even a few more months. God's resolutions were made before the beginning of time, and they
are good FOREVER. God has resolved never to leave us or forsake us. When we have God, we have all we need.

There is nothing wrong with deciding to eat healthy, exercise more, save money, or help charitable causes in the new year. These resolutions may enhance and improve our lives.

My terms of reference in this narration on resolution are three:

## 1. Behavioural modifications

2. Spiritual resolution to worship and practise His word

## 3. Forgiveness

## 1. Behavioural modifications

Throw away the material things that are of no value to our existence and growth. Do not hoard or clutter your space with things of the past. Clear the clutter of things that you don't need. Like, if in your closet you have not touched a dress or a shirt for a few years, give it away or discard it. Likewise, throw away disturbing and hurtful baggage like anger, procrastination, jealousy, and selfishness. Such material things and disturbing thoughts do not add any value to the goodness in us or help us live happily. According to Romans 12:19, ESV: Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the
wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

People around us don't hold the key to our happiness. These are just situations we face in the day-to-day life, like an urgent assignment that was not delivered or a project that missed timelines or a role expectation that we may have missed. All these are stress creators or conflict generators. We must not carry the judgments and worries of what others think or say about us. This will stress us; it will create anxiety, and we will fail further. The social media "likes" on our posts aren't the validation of who we are; they are merely chatter. Ignore such chatter; they are distractions that will down us. Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

## 2. Spiritual resolution to worship and practise His word

I did not take time to seriously examine my new year's resolution until I blended it with my faith. Spiritual resolutions are decisions or goals to ignite our spirituality and to grow closer to God. Although the Bible says nothing about making New Year resolutions, it does give us wise advice about making our lists. In 1740, the Englishman who founded the Methodist movement, John Wesley, along with his brother Charles, began a New Year's Eve service at the church, called the Covenant Renewal Service. We also
worship on this day to commemorate the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our life must be known by what we stood for and what we did for it to last much beyond our time. This is the legacy we want to leave through our spiritual practice and make this life that God has given us, worthwhile. We must stay humble about our plans and achievements. These achievements are His grace that we earned through our practice of the faith. Unlike God, we do not have the power to fulfill all our resolutions. According to Proverbs, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." Life can change from one moment to the other; we may look successful with wealth and all the gifts of good health, but do not boast, we may lose it any moment.

## 2. Forgiveness

Why is forgiveness important for relationships? This is a crucial step to resolve conflict. We often ruin our lives based on past situations and decisions we might have taken in those situations. It is worth asking the simple question: How did Jesus resolve conflict?

Jesus loved Peter, who undermined His mission and then betrayed him. Jesus frequently entered many prophetic debates and accepted invitations to eat in the homes of religious leaders, who were trying to trap him. Even on the cross, he connected to his enemies by asking his Father to forgive them.

Forgiveness isn't an easy resolution. If our new year resolution is to let go of chatter and negativity, and be on the
journey of seeking strength in worship, forgiveness is essential to cleanse ourselves. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

Paul in Ephesians 4:32 says: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God has forgiven you." In this sentence, Paul has summarized the biblical message: we must be kind, compassionate and forgiving. In Mathew 18: 21-22, it is said, forgive your brother for sins done against you as many times as your brother needs forgiving. Colossians $3: 13$, NIV says: Bear with each other and forgive one another if you have a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

In Summary,
$\square$ Remember that to keep a resolve, we must change our behaviour and make sure our resolutions are reasonable. Resolutions will fail if there is a lack of accountability.
] There must be a periodic assessment of how we are doing with our behavioural changes and how we are addressing our spiritual hunger. Lack of planning causes last-minute rush and stress. Live life easily and at your pace with perfect resolutions that you can undertake.

- Lastly, preparing to excel in whatever we do starts with calling upon our Lord, coming to God in a relationship, praying, and seeking the Lord with all our hearts.

Our faith is not one more item on a "todo" list. Our faith forms our "to be and to do" list.
life is not being rich, being popular, being
highly educated, or being perfect. It's all about being real, humble, able to share yourselves and to touch the life of others." Hence let us serve others through sharing and caring in all possible ways since we shall not pass this way again to retrace our
path. Manav Seva is Madhav Seva (Service shall not pass this way again to retrace our
path. Manav Seva is Madhav Seva (Service of mankind is Service of God).
"Shared joy is double joy, shared sorrow is half sorrow"

- a Swedish proverb
"All that is not given is lost"
- an old Indian proverb
blessings will flow into us. "A meaningful
(Continued from page 25)


## Sbaring and Caring

Like the two lakes which receive water from the same source, all of us receive wealth, knowledge, love and respect from our fellow beings. But if we do not share what we have received, we may also end up like the Dead Sea. The love, the respect, the knowledge, the wealth and all other goodness within us evaporate from us. And as the water of the Sea of Galilee flows out, if we share what we have with others, we will then be overwhelmed with love and joy. The more we give, the more we get. Abundant

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Mpeople's behaviour and character but often very slow to see the same flaws in our own behaviour and character. This seems to be a common human tendency. There could be a psychological reason underlying this tendency. As I am not a psychologist, I shall not try to make a psychological analysis of the matter. What I shall attempt here will only be the presentation of a rather sketchy layman's view of what is observable outside.

In my view, this tendency has a deep connection with another human trait - I mean the trait of habit-formation, which, in turn, has a lot to do with the disposition for casual behaviour. Many people seem to have an inclination for taking things lightly, not seriously enough; this results in unthinking behaviour; they do not pause a moment to consider what they will say or do about something, or how they will say it or do it; they have a casual approach to everything. But when it comes to the assessment of another man's ways, they turn very critical all of a sudden. I am rather puzzled by this phenomenon, and I fail to offer an explanation for it; but I do see this happening. All I would wish to tell a person who turns critical about another man and comments casually about it, is that the other man could be as casual in his behaviour as he himself is in making remarks about it! Or, he may have his own reasons for doing what he does, which you are not aware of.

Well, this is a tendency that can easily be checked and corrected; it is just a matter of replacing one habit with another, a more desirable one, simply by making a conscious effort. The first step seems to be to tell yourself
that it is not in good taste to make an adverse remark in public about someone else's behaviour or character. When a comment of that sort comes up in your mind, just pause for a moment before you say it; then, you are likely to modify it in order to make it less unpalatable to the others in your company, or you may change your mind, and stop yourself from uttering it! If this happens once, it may happen again. Well then, you are on your path to replacing a bad habit with a good one! Tell yourself that it projects your own person in a bad light when you make an adverse comment about another person. Also remember it will not be very difficult to replace your bad habit with a good one, if only you will make up your mind and put in a little effort.

It does not do anyone any good if you malign another person in public; it may just create a lot of bad blood. Others who may have heard you, will only begin to see you in a poorer light. And if the victim of your attack happens to come to know about what you have said about him, whatever appreciation he may have had in his mind about you will only get ruined. Your community life suffers a bad injury, all because of your unbridled tongue. Check your tongue before the damage is done.

Perhaps after a lapse of time, you can try to make a new beginning. Try consciously to train your eyes to see what is good in others. Try to bring this welcome change into your mentality; encourage this new habit to grow in you. Soon you will experience a welcome change in your very approach to life. You will begin to see everything in a new light, and life will certainly become much more meaningful for you. Try and see how it works. Good luck!

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KITCHEN ${ }^{\circ}$ TREASURES


St. James, in his epistle, highlights the potential of the human tongue for both good and evil. From early times man has succeeded in taming so many animals and birds, both domestic and wild. A rider brings under his control a powerful horse with a small metallic bit in its mouth and the reins attached to it. The captain steers massive ships with a small rudder. The pilot skilfully operates technically advanced aircraft. But man finds it extremely difficult to tame his own tongue, a tiny organ in his body.

Natural springs yield only fresh water. We do not expect fresh water and bitter water coming from the same source. It is quite astonishing that the human tongue differs from this natural pattern. Blessings and curses emerge from the same tongue. St. James focuses on the incongruity of praising God and cursing as well as injuring fellow human beings. "Unless brought under the Holy Spirit, human tongue will continue to be a restless evil full of deadly poison" (James 3:8).

What this tiny organ does has consequences far out of proportion to its size. It is like a small spark capable of kindling a raging fire. A forest fire begins
with a small insignificant flame, but the consequences are often catastrophic. We are tempted to blow up when angry and let our words fly from our mouths uncontrolled. To give 'tit for tat' is our natural tendency. Evil traits of human nature like pride, hatred, wrath and vengeance are expressed through the tongue. Gossip, slander and characterassassination are works of the tongue. When we tell lies, boastfully exaggerate facts, scoff at others and are engaged in unholy vain talks we miserably fail in controlling our tongues. St. James emphasises the tongue's destructive and poisonous nature.

The power of speech is a precious gift of God. One spoken word is enough to bring happiness or sorrow, hope or despair and life or death. Verbal taunts and abusive words are like destructive bullets, darts and swords which leave invisible but real cuts and scars on others. They trigger quarrels, suicides and even murders. Apostle Paul calls for self-control which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:2223) Controlling one's words is the mark of spiritual maturity.

St. James affirms that the Devil is behind such misuse of the tongue. Simon Peter's tendency to speak impulsively landed him in trouble more than once (Matthew 16:21-23, Matthew 26:69-74). Peninnah made Hannah's life miserable by continually humiliating her for being childless (1 Samuel 1:6-7). On the other hand, sweet and gracious words heal, comfort and encourage. When Elizabeth, wife of Zachariah, the priest, heard Mary's greetings, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke out really encouraging and blissful words which might have cheered up Mary and renewed hope and confidence in her. Again in a moving demonstration of loyalty, Ruth insisted on leaving her motherland Moab and following Naomi to Bethlehem. Ruth
spoke gracious words that would have boosted Naomi's spirit. "Your people will be my people and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16).

St. Matthew affirms that we will be accountable to God for every word that we speak. Christians need to exercise special care to see that their tongues are kept under the control of the Holy Spirit. In our own strength, we cannot do that. But when we surrender ourselves to God's Will, He will do it for us. Let us pray to God to give us the right word at the right moment and the wisdom to decide when to remain silent. Let us always keep in our minds David's famous prayer in Psalm 141:3 "Set a guard O Lord over my mouth and keep watch over the door of my lips."


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| M.G. Kuruvilla | <br> His Toliness}



'Hisis Holiness' is a title or honorific that we use to address the supreme heads of some Christian churches and also the heads of some Sanyasi Maths. Unfortunately, we don't use the same for the Supreme Head of the Universe, the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, all pervading God. We know God is 'holy' in its most superlative degree but we attribute holiness to others by virtue of their earthly positions.

As I was pondering over this, Jesus came down from the Crucifix. I was delighted but Jesus knew what was going on in my mind and started speaking to me:

Js: Nice to see you again this day, but why do you look so thoughtful?

Me: Your Holiness, I am overwhelmed at your Majesty's kindness to talk to me, a poor sinner...

Js: Good, you have learnt to speak in the language of your clergy... Holiness... Majesty... sinner...

Me: No Lord, I am genuinely feeling it in my heart...

Js: Yes, but I am not very happy with this language... it is all because of the way you are taught... You know I came down to tell you that God is your father... I have relieved you all from the burden of sin...but you people still love to dwell in the hangover of sin...

Me: Sorry Lord, I thought of holiness and sin because the Great Lent is coming...

Js: Oh, you are pretty serious about it... but you have been observing this for many years now...do you really feel any difference in your attitude or outlook...?

Me: Yes Lord...there is a good feeling in the days of Lent... actually it is a great celebration... there are continuous programs... as the days progress, I feel my holiness increasing... it reaches a climax on Good Friday...but...

## Js: But...?

Me: Sorry my Lord, it is like a cycle... the tempo drops on the Saturday... Easter is again more of a celebration... I am afraid, my holiness starts waning but I am confident I can make up next year! The rituals are not enough to help me hold on...

Js: Don't worry... it is good that you are honest... you are holy as long as you have this awareness...you are the Temple of God... you are the light of the world... I am only cautioning that the light in you shall not fade... I have a mission for each one of you...

Someone entered the room and the Crucifix was back in its position... It left me thinking about "my holiness" vs. "His Holiness". His words rang in my ears, "Be holy, for I am holy". (1 Peter 1:16 read with Leviticus 19:2). It is a call for all of us. As the Lord desires, let us watch the changes that occur in us during this period Lent... His Holiness wants to promote my holiness!


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